

## STATEMENT

I AM HERE TODAY TO PROVIDE A SUMMARY OF THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE SHIPMENT OF SENSITIVE MISSILE COMPONENTS TO TAIWAN, AND TO ANNOUNCE THE RESULTING ACTIONS AND DECISIONS. A COPY OF THIS STATEMENT AND A FACT SHEET WILL BE AVAILABLE AFTER THIS PRESS CONFERENCE.

A CREDIBLE NUCLEAR DETERRENT HAS BEEN ESSENTIAL TO OUR SECURITY AS A NATION AND IT REMAINS SO TODAY. THE SAFETY, SECURITY AND RELIABILITY OF OUR NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND ASSOCIATED COMPONENTS ARE OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE. OUR POLICY IS CLEAR: WE WILL ENSURE THE COMPLETE PHYSICAL CONTROL OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND WE WILL PROPERLY HANDLE THEIR ASSOCIATED COMPONENTS AT ALL TIMES. IT IS A TREMENDOUS RESPONSIBILITY AND ONE WE MUST AND, WILL NEVER TAKE LIGHTLY.

ON MARCH 25 OF THIS YEAR, I APPOINTED ADMIRAL KIRKLAND H. DONALD, DIRECTOR OF NAVAL PROPULSION, TO CONDUCT A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION INTO THE FACTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE MIS-SHIPMENT OF FOUR MK-12 FORWARD-

SECTION REENTRY VEHICLE ASSEMBLIES TO TAIWAN. ADMIRAL DONALD HOLDS THE MOST SENIOR POSITION IN OUR MILITARY DEDICATED TO THE SAFE AND EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT OF NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY IN DEFENSE OF THE NATION. ADMIRAL DONALD HAS COMPLETED HIS INVESTIGATION, AND I HAVE RECEIVED HIS FINAL REPORT.

LET ME SUMMARIZE THE FINDINGS OF ADMIRAL DONALD'S INVESTIGATION.

FIRST, THE INVESTIGATION DID NOT FIND ANYTHING THAT WOULD AFFECT THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THE PUBLIC OR OUR MEN AND WOMEN IN UNIFORM OR CALL INTO QUESTION THE SAFETY, SECURITY AND RELIABILITY OF OUR NUCLEAR ARSENAL.

SECOND, THE INTEGRITY OF THE NATION'S NUCLEAR DETERRENT FORCE WAS NOT PLACED AT RISK AS A RESULT OF THIS MIS-SHIPMENT. MK-12 FORWARD-SECTION ASSEMBLIES ARE DEVICES THAT ARM AND FUSE NUCLEAR WARHEADS. THEY DO NOT CONTAIN EXPLOSIVES OR FISSILE MATERIAL AND ARE NOT INHERENTLY DANGEROUS. FURTHER, THE INVESTIGATION YIELDED NO EVIDENCE THAT THE FORWARD-SECTION ASSEMBLIES WERE

COMPROMISED WHILE THEY WERE OUT OF U.S. CUSTODY, NOR WAS THERE EVER ANY COMPROMISE OF CONTROL OF NUCLEAR MATERIALS. HAVING SAID THAT, THIS INCIDENT REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT FAILURE TO ENSURE THE SECURITY OF SENSITIVE MILITARY COMPONENTS, AND, MORE TROUBLING, IT DEPICTS A PATTERN OF POOR PERFORMANCE THAT WAS HIGHLIGHTED TO US FOLLOWING LAST YEAR'S INCIDENT INVOLVING THE IMPROPER MOVEMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS BETWEEN MINOT AFB AND BARKSDALE AFB.

THE SPECIFIC CAUSE OF THIS EVENT WAS THE AIR FORCE AND DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY'S SOLE RELIANCE ON, AND LACK OF COMPLIANCE WITH, EXISTING SUPPLY SYSTEM PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE POSITIVE CONTROL OF THE FOUR FORWARD-SECTION ASSEMBLIES. THE SUPPLY SYSTEM IS DESIGNED TO MOVE AND CONTROL LARGE QUANTITIES OF TYPICALLY LOW-VALUE MATERIAL AND MISTAKES DO OCCUR. HOWEVER, MISTAKES ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE WHEN SHIPPING AND CONTROLLING SENSITIVE CLASSIFIED PARTS. ADDITIONAL CONTROLS THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN APPROPRIATE WERE NOT USED. MOREOVER, EXISTING PROCEDURES WERE NOT ALWAYS FOLLOWED.

BASED ON ADMIRAL DONALD'S INITIAL ASSESSMENT PROVIDED TO ME IN APRIL, I DIRECTED THE AIR FORCE, THE NAVY AND THE DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY TO CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE INVENTORY OF ALL NUCLEAR AND NUCLEAR RELATED MATERIALS TO RE-ESTABLISH POSITIVE CONTROL OF THESE SENSITIVE CLASSIFIED COMPONENTS. THESE ACTIONS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED AND THE RESULTS ARE BEING EVALUATED.

HOWEVER, THOSE ACTIONS ONLY ADDRESS THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM. DURING THE COURSE OF THE INVESTIGATION, OTHER ISSUES INDICATING A DECLINE IN THE AIR FORCE'S NUCLEAR MISSION FOCUS AND PERFORMANCE BECAME APPARENT. RATHER THAN AN ISOLATED OCCURRENCE, THE SHIPMENT OF THE FOUR FORWARD SECTION ASSEMBLIES TO TAIWAN WAS A SYMPTOM OF A DEGRADATION OF THE AUTHORITY, STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE, AND TECHNICAL COMPETENCE WITHIN THE NATION'S ICBM FORCE. SIMILAR TO THE BOMBER-SPECIFIC AUGUST 2007 MINOT/BARKSDALE NUCLEAR WEAPONS TRANSFER INCIDENT, THIS INCIDENT TOOK PLACE WITHIN THE LARGER ENVIRONMENT OF DECLINING AIR FORCE NUCLEAR MISSION FOCUS AND PERFORMANCE. SPECIFICALLY, THE INVESTIGATION IDENTIFIED SYSTEMIC ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS DECLINE.

FIRST: THE INVESTIGATION IDENTIFIED COMMONALITIES BETWEEN THE AUGUST 2007 MINOT INCIDENT AND THIS EVENT. BOTH EVENTS INVOLVED A CHAIN OF FAILURES THAT LED TO AN UNACCEPTABLE INCIDENT. THE INVESTIGATION DETERMINED THE AIR FORCE DOES NOT HAVE A CLEAR, DEDICATED AUTHORITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NUCLEAR ENTERPRISE AND WHO SETS AND MAINTAINS CONSISTENT, RIGOROUS STANDARDS OF OPERATION. THE INVESTIGATION CONCLUDED THAT THESE SHORTCOMINGS RESULTED FROM AN EROSION OF PERFORMANCE STANDARDS WITHIN THE INVOLVED COMMANDS AND A LACK OF EFFECTIVE AIR FORCE LEADERSHIP OVERSIGHT.

SECOND: THE INVESTIGATION FOUND THAT THE FAILURES THAT LED TO THE MIS-SHIPMENT COULD HAVE BEEN PREVENTED HAD THE AIR FORCE'S INSPECTION AND OVERSIGHT PROGRAMS BEEN FUNCTIONING EFFECTIVELY. THE INVESTIGATION ALSO DETERMINED THAT THE LACK OF A CRITICAL SELF-ASSESSMENT CULTURE IN THE AIR FORCE NUCLEAR PROGRAM, AND INSPECTION PROCESSES THAT DIMINISH OWNERSHIP AT THE COMMAND LEVEL, MAKE IT UNLIKELY THAT SYSTEMIC WEAKNESSES CAN BE DISCOVERED AND ADDRESSED. OVERALL, THE AIR FORCE HAS NOT

BEEN SUFFICIENTLY CRITICAL OF ITS PAST PERFORMANCE, AND THAT HAS LED TO RECURRING PROBLEMS OF A SIMILAR NATURE.

THIRD: THE INVESTIGATION CONFIRMED A DECLINING TREND IN AIR FORCE NUCLEAR EXPERTISE, SIMILAR TO FINDINGS IN OTHER EARLIER REPORTS. THIS LACK OF EXPERTISE CONTRIBUTED TO INVOLVED COMMANDS OVERLOOKING THE PROBLEMS THAT LED TO THIS MIS-SHIPMENT. YEARS AGO, THE CAREER PATH FOR AIR FORCE PERSONNEL IN THE NUCLEAR FIELD WAS WELL-ESTABLISHED AND PRESTIGIOUS. HOWEVER, THE OVERALL MISSION FOCUS OF THE AIR FORCE HAS SHIFTED AWAY FROM THIS NUCLEAR MISSION, MAKING IT DIFFICULT TO RETAIN SUFFICIENT EXPERTISE. THE AIR FORCE HAS NOT EFFECTIVELY COMPENSATED FOR THIS DIMINISHED EXPERTISE THROUGH TRAINING AND ACTIVE CAREER MANAGEMENT.

THE REPORT MAKES CLEAR THAT THESE PROBLEMS AND MISTAKES HAVE THEIR ROOTS IN DECISIONS MADE OVER A PERIOD OF AT LEAST TEN YEARS. NONETHELESS, MANY OF THE PROBLEMS LEADING TO THE MINOT AND NOSE CONE INCIDENTS HAVE BEEN KNOWN OR SHOULD HAVE BEEN KNOWN. ACTION IS REQUIRED ON

TWO FRONTS: 1) FIXING THE STRUCTURAL, PROCEDURAL AND CULTURAL PROBLEMS, AND 2) ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY.

IN TERMS OF ADDRESSING THE PROBLEMS, THE AIR FORCE HAS ALREADY TAKEN INITIAL STEPS. HOWEVER, I BELIEVE AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE IS REQUIRED TO ENSURE SUFFICIENTLY FAR-REACHING AND COMPREHENSIVE MEASURES ARE TAKEN.

ACCORDINGLY, I HAVE ASKED DR. JAMES SCHLESINGER, FORMER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, SECRETARY OF ENERGY AND DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE, TO LEAD A SENIOR-LEVEL TASK FORCE THAT WILL RECOMMEND IMPROVEMENTS NECESSARY TO ENSURE THAT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONTROL ARE MAINTAINED IN THE STEWARDSHIP AND OPERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, DELIVERY VEHICLES AND SENSITIVE COMPONENTS.

THE WORK OF THE TASK FORCE WILL HAVE TWO PHASES. THE FIRST PHASE, TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 60 DAYS, WILL MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON ORGANIZATIONAL, PROCEDURAL AND POLICY MATTERS INVOLVING THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE. THE SECOND PHASE, TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 120 DAYS, WILL EXAMINE MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

AND RELATED MATERIALS AND SYSTEMS ACROSS THE ENTIRE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE. THE TASK FORCE WILL BE DRAWN FROM THE DEFENSE POLICY BOARD AND THE DEFENSE SCIENCE BOARD. A COPY OF THE TASK FORCE'S MISSION STATEMENT AND CHARTER LETTER WILL BE PROVIDED AT THE END OF THIS BRIEFING.

THE PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED BY THE INVESTIGATION HAVE DEVELOPED OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS. HOWEVER, ADMIRAL DONALD'S REPORT ALSO IDENTIFIED CONTEMPORARY FAILURES AND LACK OF EFFECTIVE OVERSIGHT. INDIVIDUALS IN COMMAND AND LEADERSHIP POSITIONS NOT ONLY FELL SHORT IN TERMS OF SPECIFIC ACTIONS, THEY FAILED TO RECOGNIZE SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS, TO ADDRESS THOSE PROBLEMS, OR – WHERE BEYOND THEIR AUTHORITY TO ACT – TO CALL THE ATTENTION OF SUPERIORS TO THOSE PROBLEMS. EACH HAD THE LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY TO IDENTIFY AND CORRECT – OR FLAG FOR OTHERS – THE STRUCTURAL, PROCEDURAL AND PERFORMANCE DEFICIENCIES IDENTIFIED IN JUST A FEW WEEKS' TIME BY ADMIRAL DONALD.



THE CHALLENGE, THEN, IS HOW AND AT WHAT LEVEL TO APPLY INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTABILITY. HERE, ADMIRAL DONALD'S REPORT PROVIDES GUIDANCE. HE CONCLUDES, "SENIOR LEADERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY ALSO ARISES FROM THE FINDINGS INDICATIVE OF AN OVERALL DECLINE IN AIR FORCE NUCLEAR WEAPONS STEWARDSHIP – A PROBLEM THAT HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED, BUT NOT EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSED, FOR OVER A DECADE. BOTH THE MINOT/BARKSDALE NUCLEAR WEAPONS TRANSFER INCIDENT AND THE TAIWAN MIS-SHIPMENT, WHILE DIFFERENT IN SPECIFICS, HAVE A COMMON ORIGIN – THE GRADUAL EROSION OF NUCLEAR STANDARDS AND A LACK OF EFFECTIVE OVERSIGHT BY AIR FORCE LEADERSHIP."

IT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT THE AIR FORCE IS ON THE RIGHT PATH TO CORRECTING THE SYSTEMIC AND INSTITUTIONAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS STEWARDSHIP PROBLEMS THAT HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED. A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF AIR FORCE GENERAL OFFICERS AND COLONELS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS POTENTIALLY SUBJECT TO DISCIPLINARY MEASURES, RANGING FROM REMOVAL FROM COMMAND TO LETTERS OF REPRIMAND. SUCH MEASURES, WHETHER TAKEN BY THE AIR FORCE OR BY MY DIRECTION, MIGHT HELP ADDRESS IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS BUT, I

HAVE CONCLUDED, WOULD NOT ADEQUATELY ADDRESS THE BROADER ISSUES INVOLVED.

ACCORDINGLY, AFTER DISCUSSION WITH THE PRESIDENT AND WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, I HAVE ACCEPTED THE RESIGNATION OF THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE AND THE RESIGNATION OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE AIR FORCE. I WILL DIRECT THE NEW SECRETARY AND CHIEF OF STAFF, ONCE CONFIRMED, TO EVALUATE EACH OF THE INDIVIDUALS IDENTIFIED BY ADMIRAL DONALD AS BEARING RESPONSIBILITY IN THE RECENT INCIDENTS AND SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS TO DETERMINE WHETHER AND WHAT DISCIPLINARY MEASURES ARE WARRANTED – AND WHETHER OR NOT THEY CAN BE PART OF THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED BY THE INVESTIGATION.

IN SUMMARY, I BELIEVE THESE ACTIONS ARE REQUIRED BECAUSE:

1) THE FOCUS OF THE AIR FORCE LEADERSHIP HAS DRIFTED WITH RESPECT TO PERHAPS ITS MOST SENSITIVE MISSION; 2) PERFORMANCE STANDARDS IN THAT SENSITIVE AREA WERE ALLOWED TO DEGRADE; 3) ONLY AFTER TWO INTERNATIONALLY-SENSITIVE INCIDENTS DID AIR FORCE LEADERSHIP APPLY INCREASED ATTENTION TO THE PROBLEM; AND 4) EVEN THEN,

ACTION TO ENSURE A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION OF WHAT WENT WRONG WAS NOT INITIATED BY THE AIR FORCE LEADERSHIP, BUT REQUIRED MY INTERVENTION.

MIKE WYNNE IS A DEDICATED AND HONORABLE PUBLIC SERVANT, AND BUZZ MOSELEY HAS GIVEN DECADES OF COURAGEOUS AND DEVOTED SERVICE TO HIS COUNTRY. THEY BOTH DESERVE OUR GRATITUDE FOR THEIR SERVICE. I HAVE ENJOYED SERVING WITH THEM AND DEEPLY REGRET THAT THE ISSUES BEFORE US REQUIRE THE ACTIONS I HAVE TAKEN.

WHILE THIS IS A DIFFICULT DAY FOR THE AIR FORCE, FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, AND FOR ME, IT ALSO MARKS THE BEGINNING OF A RETURN TO THE STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE AND ACCOMPLISHMENT FOR WHICH THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE HAS LONG BEEN KNOWN. I WILL MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A NEW SECRETARY AND AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF SHORTLY.

LET ME CLOSE ON A PERSONAL NOTE. THE AIR FORCE IS MY SERVICE. THAT IS THE UNIFORM I WORE NEARLY 42 YEARS AGO WHEN I FIRST ENCOUNTERED – IN THE STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND – THE EXTRAORDINARY MEN AND WOMEN WHO PROTECT AND

DEFEND OUR COUNTRY. EVERY DAY, THE AMAZING MEN AND WOMEN OF OUR AIR FORCE ARE IN COMBAT IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN, SUPPORTING ALL THE SERVICES WORLD-WIDE AND DETERRING POTENTIAL ADVERSARIES. THEY HAVE MY RESPECT, MY SUPPORT AND MY COMMITMENT TO DO EVERYTHING I CAN IN MY REMAINING TIME TO WORK WITH THEM TO SUSTAIN THE TRADITION OF SERVICE AND EXCELLENCE THAT HAS BEEN THE HALLMARK OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE SINCE ITS INCEPTION.